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J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI'S
MIDNIGHT NATION

midnight nation
created by j. michael straczynski

"MIDWAY TO JUDGMENT."

cover
gary frank
jonathan sibal
matt milla

Previously:
David awoke from a vision he had where he was one of the Walkers. He and Laurel then continued their trek and discovered a particular Walker who, before David, was the last to travel to "the place inbetween" to try and reclaim his soul. Before continuing, David and Laurel assisted the Walker, which Laurel knew would ultimately doom it. The Walker then advised David to not finish his journey -- to have Laurel kill him soon, before he becomes one of the Walkers... before it is too late.

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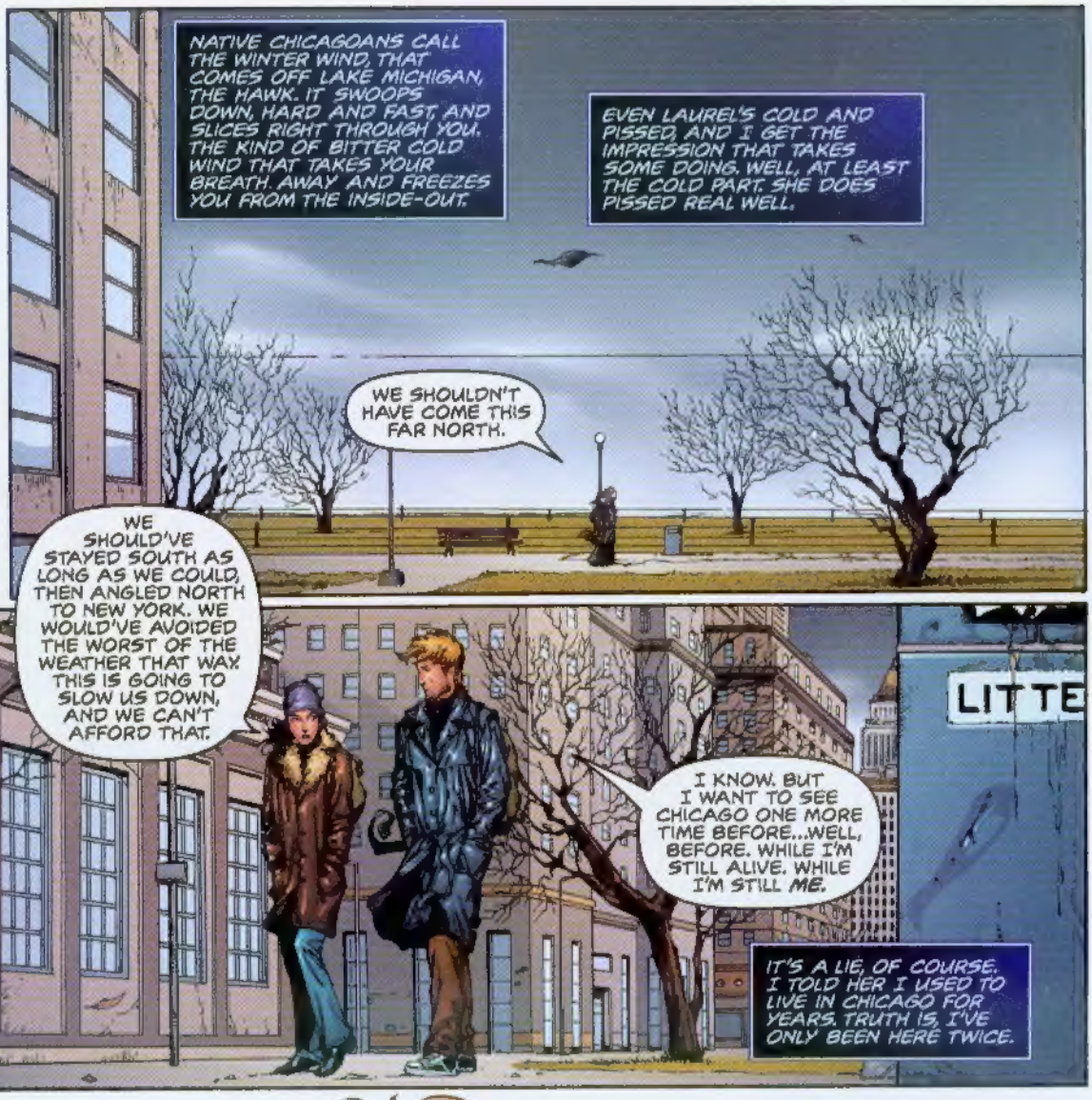
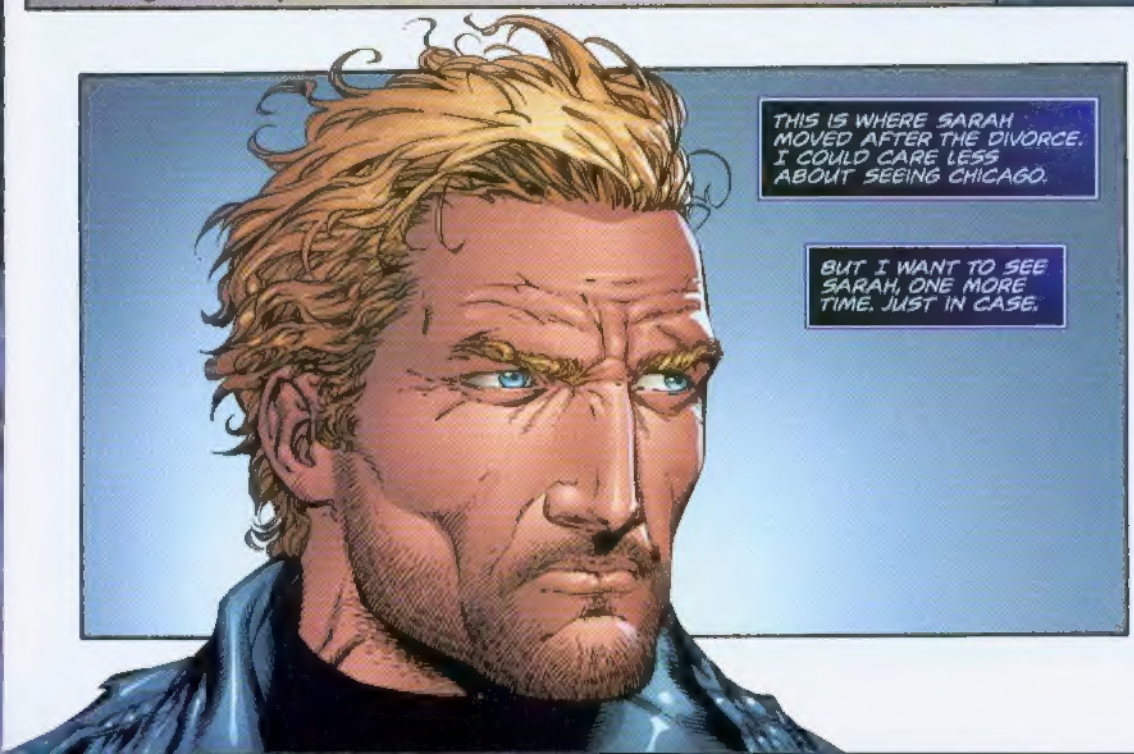
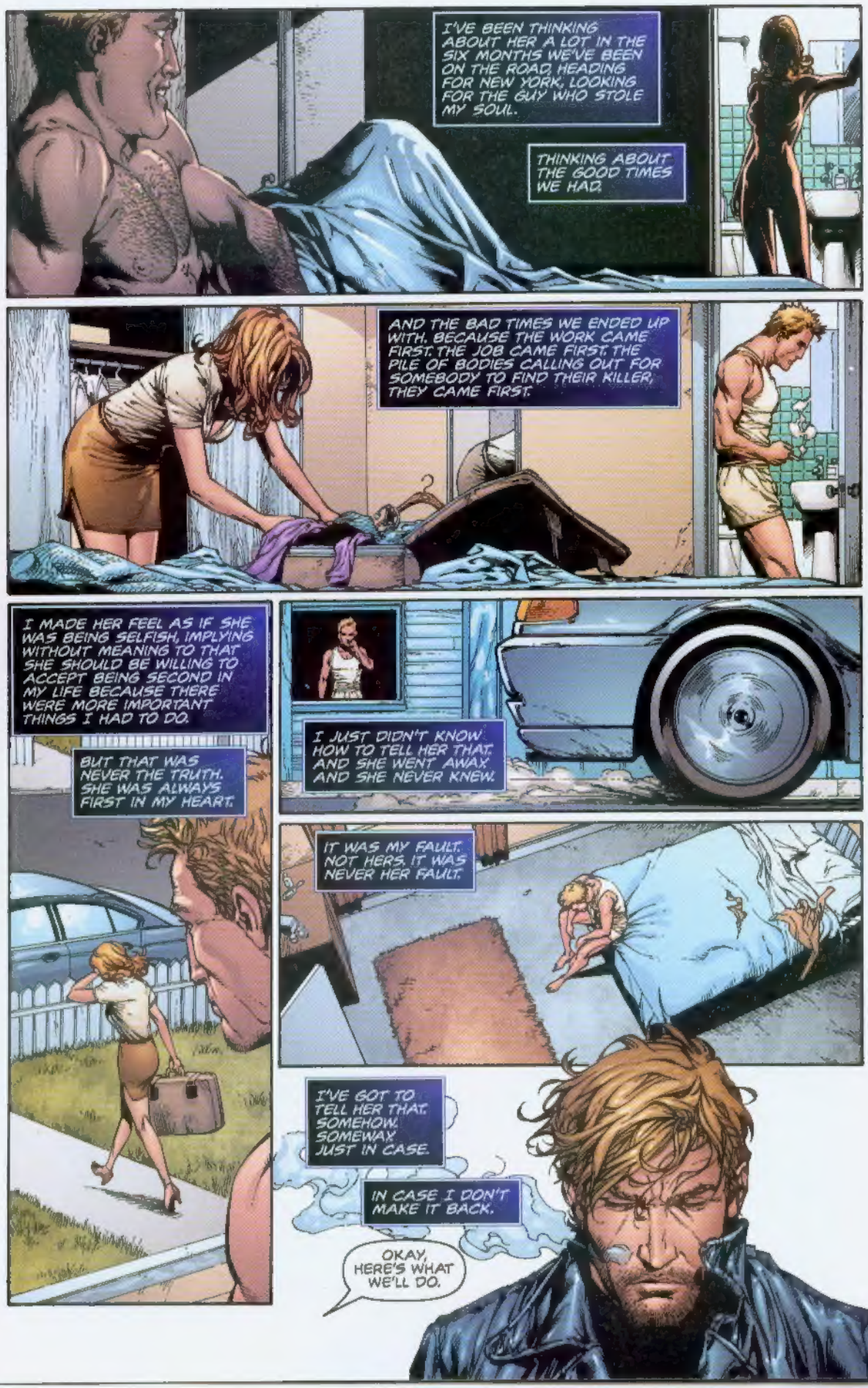
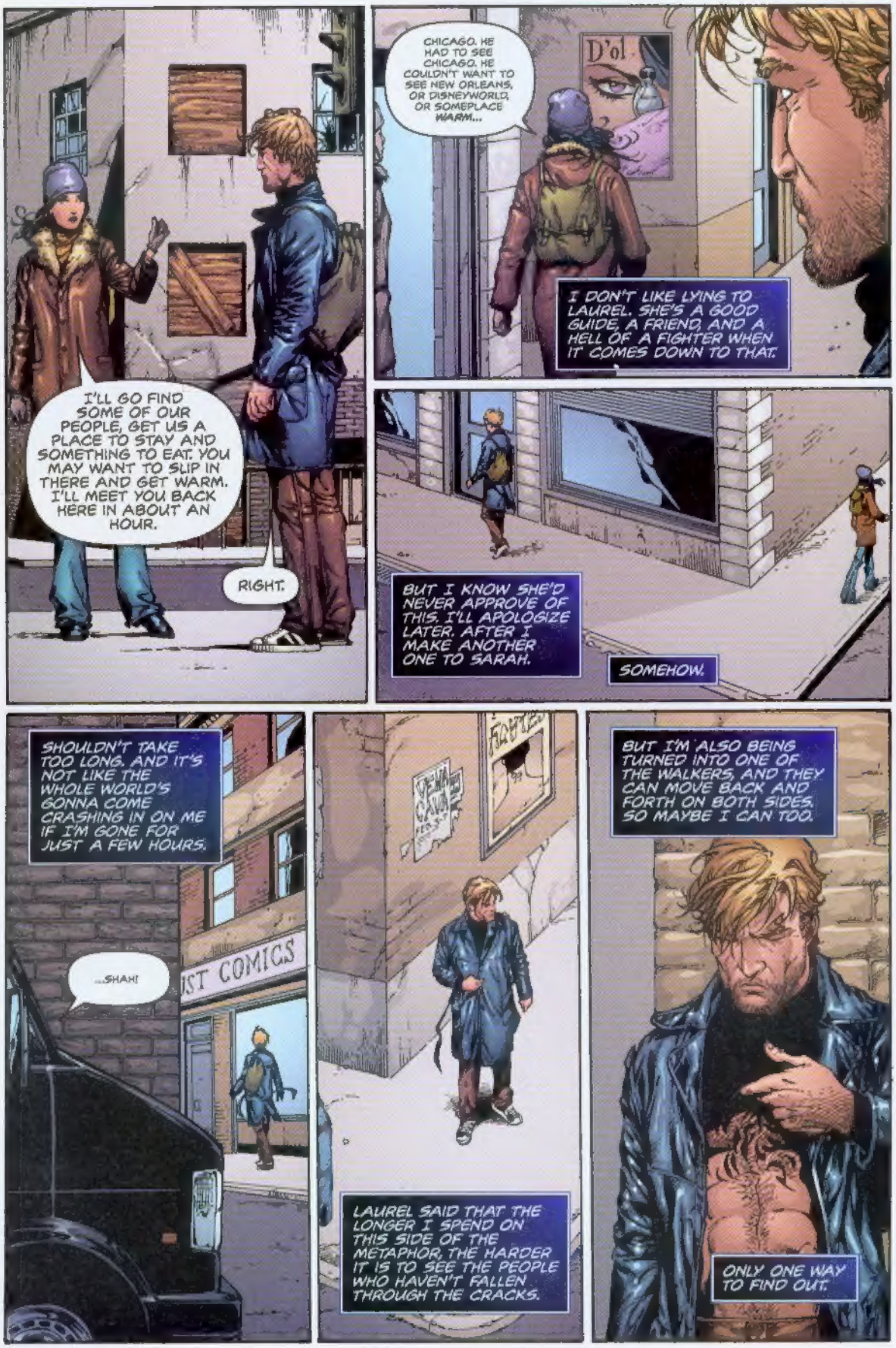

NATIVE CHICAGOANS CALL THE WINTER WIND, THAT COMES OFF LAKE MICHIGAN, THE HAWK. IT SWOOPS DOWN, HARD AND FAST, AND SLICES RIGHT THROUGH YOU. THE KIND OF BITTER COLD WIND THAT TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY AND FREEZES YOU FROM THE INSIDE-OUT.
EVEN LAUREL'S COLD AND PISSED, AND I GET THE IMPRESSION THAT TAKES SOME DOING. WELL, AT LEAST THE COLD PART. SHE DOES PISSED REAL WELL.
WE SHOULDN'T HAVE COME THIS FAR NORTH.
WE SHOULD'VE STAYED SOUTH AS LONG AS WE COULD, THEN ANGLED NORTH TO NEW YORK. WE WOULD'VE AVOIDED THE WORST OF THE WEATHER THAT WAY. THIS IS GOING TO SLOW US DOWN, AND WE CAN'T AFFORD THAT.
I KNOW. BUT I WANT TO SEE CHICAGO ONE MORE TIME BEFORE...WELL, BEFORE. WHILE I'M STILL ALIVE. WHILE I'M STILL ME.
IT'S A LIE, OF COURSE. I TOLD HER I USED TO LIVE IN CHICAGO FOR YEARS. TRUTH IS, I'VE ONLY BEEN HERE TWICE.
LITTE

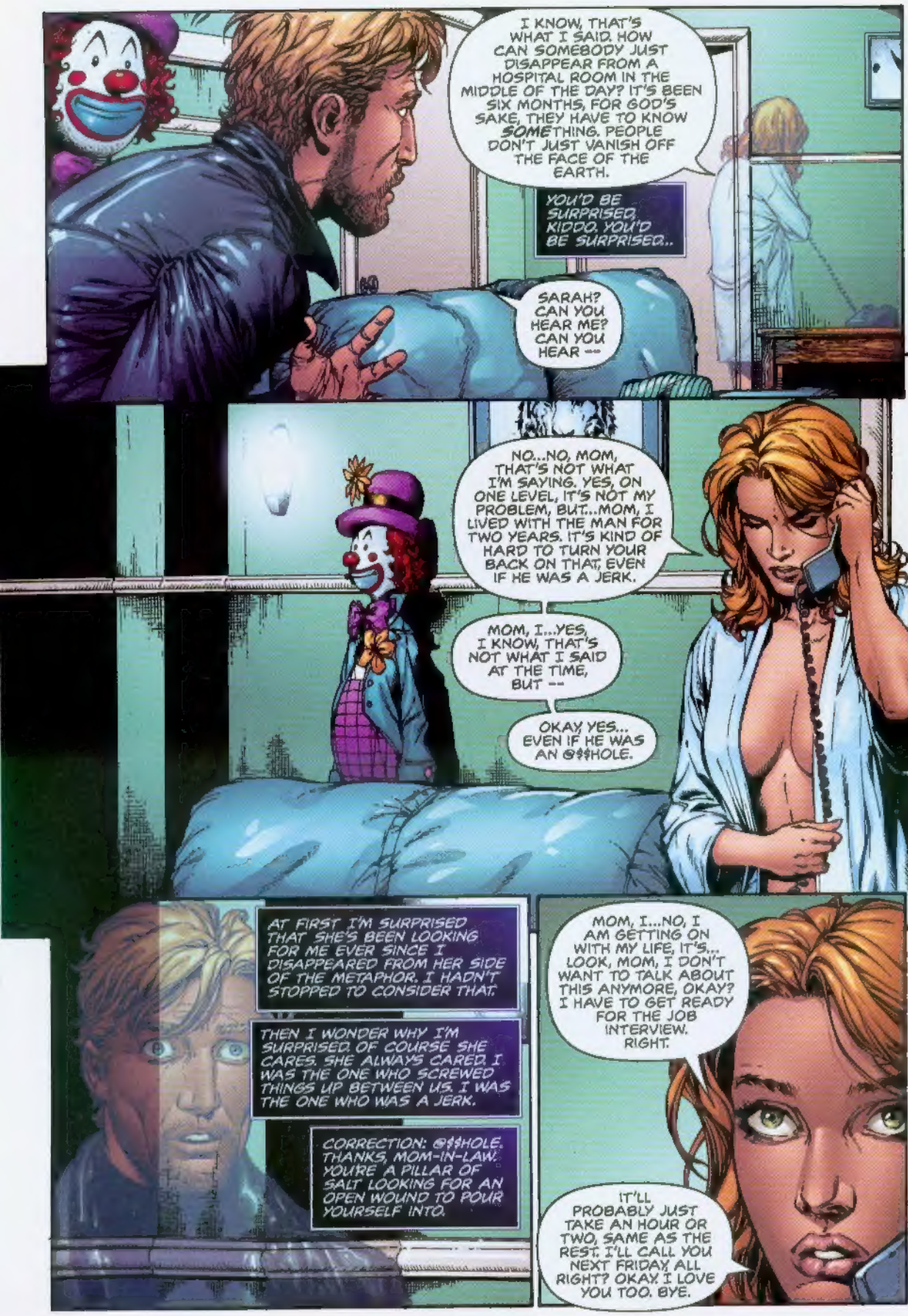

THIS IS WHERE SARAH MOVED AFTER THE DIVORCE. I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT SEEING CHICAGO.
BUT I WANT TO SEE SARAH, ONE MORE TIME. JUST IN CASE.

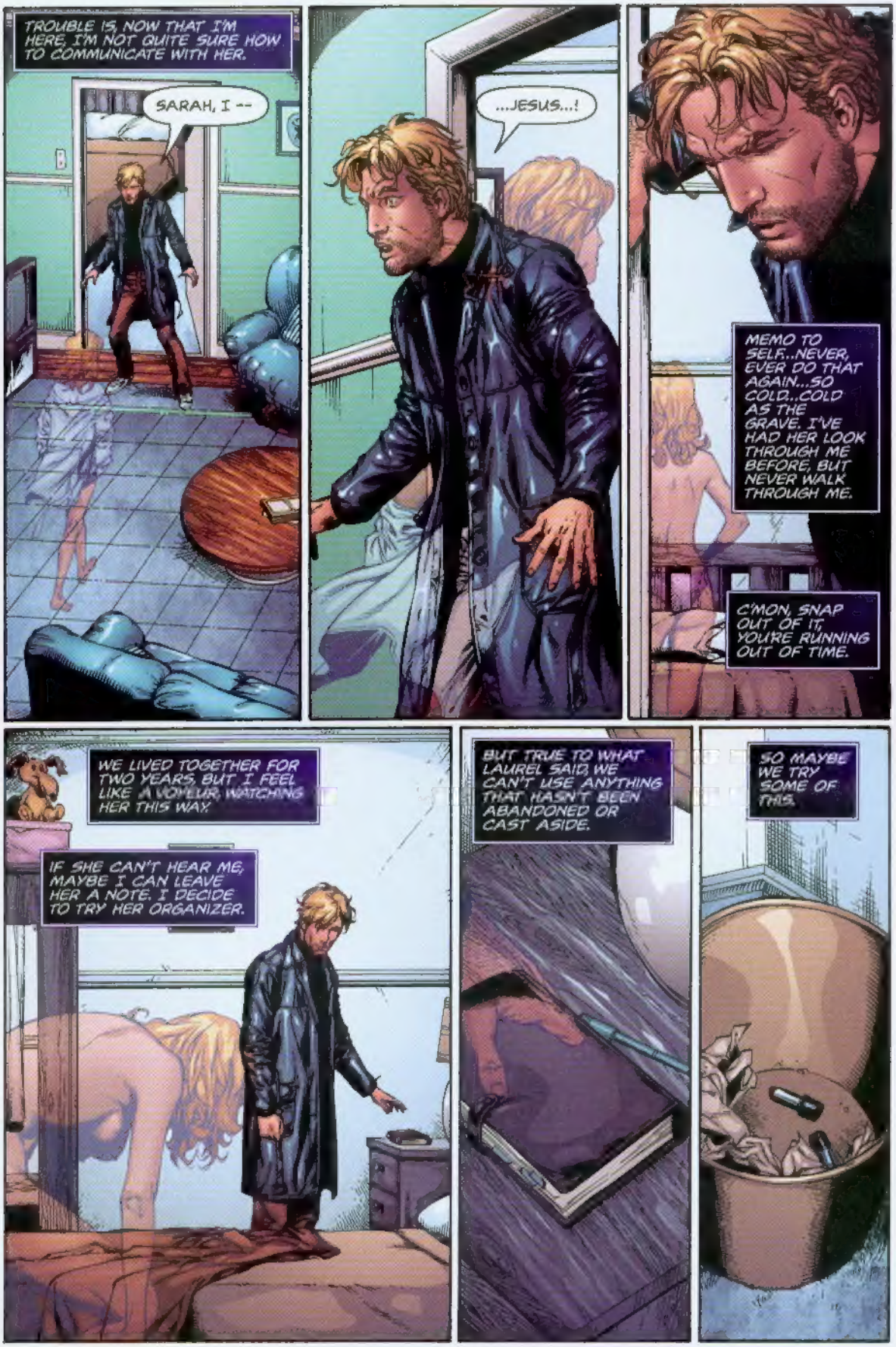

I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT HER A LOT IN THE SIX MONTHS WE'VE BEEN ON THE ROAD, HEADING FOR NEW YORK, LOOKING FOR THE GUY WHO STOLE MY SOUL.
THINKING ABOUT THE GOOD TIMES WE HAD.
AND THE BAD TIMES WE ENDED UP WITH. BECAUSE THE WORK CAME FIRST. THE JOB CAME FIRST. THE PILE OF BODIES CALLING OUT FOR SOMEBODY TO FIND THEIR KILLER, THEY CAME FIRST.
I MADE HER FEEL AS IF SHE WAS BEING SELFISH, IMPLYING WITHOUT MEANING TO THAT SHE SHOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEPT BEING SECOND IN MY LIFE BECAUSE THERE WERE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS I HAD TO DO.
BUT THAT WAS NEVER THE TRUTH. SHE WAS ALWAYS FIRST IN MY HEART.
I JUST DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO TELL HER THAT. AND SHE WENT AWAY. AND SHE NEVER KNEW.
IT WAS MY FAULT. NOT HERS. IT WAS NEVER HER FAULT.
I'VE GOT TO TELL HER THAT. SOMEHOW. SOMEWAY. JUST IN CASE.
IN CASE I DON'T MAKE IT BACK.
OKAY, HERE'S WHAT WE'LL DO.


I'LL GO FIND SOME OF OUR PEOPLE, GET US A PLACE TO STAY AND SOMETHING TO EAT. YOU MAY WANT TO SLIP IN THERE AND GET WARM. I'LL MEET YOU BACK HERE IN ABOUT AN HOUR.
RIGHT.
CHICAGO. HE HAD TO SEE CHICAGO. HE COULDN'T WANT TO SEE NEW ORLEANS, OR DISNEYWORLD, OR SOMEPLACE WARM...
D'ol
I DON'T LIKE LYING TO LAUREL. SHE'S A GOOD GUIDE, A FRIEND, AND A HELL OF A FIGHTER WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO THAT.
BUT I KNOW SHE'D NEVER APPROVE OF THIS. I'LL APOLOGIZE LATER. AFTER I MAKE ANOTHER ONE TO SARAH.
SOMEHOW.
SHOULDN'T TAKE TOO LONG. AND IT'S NOT LIKE THE WHOLE WORLD'S GONNA COME CRASHING IN ON ME IF I'M GONE FOR JUST A FEW HOURS.
...SHAH!
ST COMICS
LAUREL SAID THAT THE LONGER I SPEND ON THIS SIDE OF THE METAPHOR, THE HARDER IT IS TO SEE THE PEOPLE WHO HAVEN'T FALLEN THROUGH THE CRACKS.
BUT I'M ALSO BEING TURNED INTO ONE OF THE WALKERS, AND THEY CAN MOVE BACK AND FORTH ON BOTH SIDES. SO MAYBE I CAN TOO.
ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.

AGH...!
...$*!T!... BURNS LIKE FIRE...OH JEEZ...
-- AND I TOLD HIM NO WAY AM I MOVING TO MONTANA.
GET OUTTA THE STREET!
THERE'S NOTHING TO DO THERE!
HI. HOWYA DOING!
HEY, I'M CROSSING THE STREET HERE! GET OFF YOUR FREAKIN' CELLPHONE!

HUCCH... COUGH... URRRKKHH... DAMN...
FOO FIGHTERS
MY GUTS TURN INSIDE OUT AND TRY TO CLIMB OUT THROUGH MY THROAT. I PUSH THEM DOWN AS EVERYTHING GOES QUIET AGAIN.
AT LEAST I KNOW IT WORKS. CHALK ONE UP FOR THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD.
I KEEP MOVING. I'M PRETTY SURE I KNOW WHERE I'M GOING. I OUGHT TO...
...I WROTE THE ADDRESS ON ENOUGH ALIMONY CHECKS, THAT'S FOR SURE.
I ALWAYS TOLD HER TO KEEP ALL THE DOORS LOCKED. BUT SHE LIKES FRESH AIR. "YOU ALSO LIKE GETTING ROBBED?" I'D ASK. SHE WAS NEVER PRACTICAL THAT WAY. A FREE SPIRIT, I GUESS.
ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT THAT FELT LIKE.
I CAN FEEL HER PRESENCE. I KNOW SHE'S HERE. NOW COMES THE PART I HATE.
DAMN, HURTS EVEN MORE THAN THE FIRST TIME...
-- NO, NO ONE'S HEARD ANYTHING NEW.


I KNOW, THAT'S WHAT I SAID. HOW CAN SOMEBODY JUST DISAPPEAR FROM A HOSPITAL ROOM IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY? IT'S BEEN SIX MONTHS, FOR GOD'S SAKE, THEY HAVE TO KNOW SOMETHING. PEOPLE DON'T JUST VANISH OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH.
YOU'D BE SURPRISED, KIDDO. YOU'D BE SURPRISED...
SARAH? CAN YOU HEAR ME? CAN YOU HEAR --
NO...NO, MOM, THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M SAYING. YES, ON ONE LEVEL, IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM, BUT...MOM, I LIVED WITH THE MAN FOR TWO YEARS. IT'S KIND OF HARD TO TURN YOUR BACK ON THAT, EVEN IF HE WAS A JERK.
MOM, I...YES, I KNOW, THAT'S NOT WHAT I SAID AT THE TIME, BUT --
OKAY, YES... EVEN IF HE WAS AN @$$HOLE.
AT FIRST I'M SURPRISED THAT SHE'S BEEN LOOKING FOR ME EVER SINCE I DISAPPEARED FROM HER SIDE OF THE METAPHOR. I HADN'T STOPPED TO CONSIDER THAT.
THEN I WONDER WHY I'M SURPRISED. OF COURSE SHE CARES. SHE ALWAYS CARED. I WAS THE ONE WHO SCREWED THINGS UP BETWEEN US. I WAS THE ONE WHO WAS A JERK.
CORRECTION: @$$HOLE. THANKS, MOM-IN-LAW. YOU'RE A PILLAR OF SALT LOOKING FOR AN OPEN WOUND TO POUR YOURSELF INTO.
MOM, I...NO, I AM GETTING ON WITH MY LIFE, IT'S... LOOK, MOM, I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THIS ANYMORE, OKAY? I HAVE TO GET READY FOR THE JOB INTERVIEW. RIGHT.
IT'LL PROBABLY JUST TAKE AN HOUR OR TWO, SAME AS THE REST. I'LL CALL YOU NEXT FRIDAY, ALL RIGHT? OKAY. I LOVE YOU TOO. BYE.


TROUBLE IS, NOW THAT I'M HERE, I'M NOT QUITE SURE HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH HER.
SARAH, I --
...JESUS...!
MEMO TO SELF...NEVER, EVER DO THAT AGAIN...SO COLD...COLD AS THE GRAVE. I'VE HAD HER LOOK THROUGH ME BEFORE, BUT NEVER WALK THROUGH ME.
C'MON, SNAP OUT OF IT, YOU'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.
WE LIVED TOGETHER FOR TWO YEARS, BUT I FEEL LIKE A VOYEUR, WATCHING HER THIS WAY.
IF SHE CAN'T HEAR ME, MAYBE I CAN LEAVE HER A NOTE. I DECIDE TO TRY HER ORGANIZER.
BUT TRUE TO WHAT LAUREL SAID, WE CAN'T USE ANYTHING THAT HASN'T BEEN ABANDONED OR CAST ASIDE.
SO MAYBE WE TRY SOME OF THIS.

I TRY TO FIGURE OUT WHAT TO SAY, WHAT MOST NEEDS TO BE SAID IN THE SPACE I HAVE TO WORK WITH.
I GUESS IT COMES DOWN TO JUST TEN WORDS.
THE ONLY WORDS THAT REALLY COUNT.
I'M SORRY.
FORGIVE ME.
FORGET ME.
I LOVE YOU.
DAVID
I LEFT YOU A NOTE ON THE TABLE, LIKE WE USED TO WHEN WE WERE MAD OR WE HAD TO APOLOGIZE TO EACH OTHER. I'M SORRY FOR THE PAIN I'VE CAUSED. I'M SORRY YOU'RE STILL CAUGHT IN MY PAIN. IF I DON'T MAKE IT...
IF I DON'T MAKE IT, I JUST HOPE YOU'LL KNOW THAT I LOVED YOU, AND I WISH I HADN'T SAID HALF THE THINGS I SAID. BECAUSE I DIDN'T MEAN ANY OF THEM. THE ONLY THING I EVER MEANT WAS WHEN I SAID I LOVED YOU.
EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE USUALLY ASLEEP WHEN I SAID IT.
GOODBYE, SARAH.

THERE YOU ARE. WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU BEEN?
I --
FOR A MOMENT I CONSIDER NOT TELLING HER, THEN I FIGURE, WHAT THE HELL.
SO I TELL HER.
SHE TAKES IT, REALLY WELL, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED.
YOU DID WHAT? ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?! I TRUSTED YOU! I TOLD YOU --
IT WAS JUST SOMETHING I HAD TO DO --
NO, YOU DIDN'T! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
NO, OF COURSE YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND, YOU HAVEN'T BEEN THROUGH THIS BEFORE, BUT STILL --
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
YOU'RE REPEATING YOURSELF. UNDERSTAND WHAT?
THE WALKER ARE EVERY WHERE. THEY'RE CONSTANTLY WATCHING FOR US. BUT THEY'RE NOT JUST AFTER US, THEY'RE AFTER WHAT WE CARE ABOUT.
NEVER LET THEM KNOW WHAT YOU CARE ABOUT. NEVER GIVE THEM THAT POWER. PRETEND YOU DON'T GIVE A ?#!T ABOUT EVERYBODY IN THE WORLD, MYSELF INCLUDED, BUT NEVER, EVER LET THEM KNOW WHAT YOU CARE ABOUT.
IF THEY'RE WATCHING ME, IF THEY KNOW WHERE I AM, WHY DON'T THEY JUST KILL ME?
BECAUSE KILLING YOU ISN'T THE POINT.
THE POINT... IS TO BREAK YOU.
ANY WAY THEY HAVE TO.

I RUN AS FAST AS I CAN. FASTER THAN I'VE EVER RUN IN MY LIFE. AND ALL THE WHILE MY HEART IS POUNDING, THE BLOOD SHOUTING IN MY EARS, "IT'S TOO LATE."
IT CAN'T BE. I WON'T LET IT BE.
...NO...
NO! GOD-DAMN IT!
SHE'S NOT DEAD, I CAN FEEL IT.
SHE MIGHT AS WELL BE.
WHERE WOULD THEY TAKE HER?
YOU DON'T WANT TO GO THERE.
WHERE?
THIS IS YOUR JOURNEY YOU ASKED, I WILL TELL YOU.
BUT TOUCH ME LIKE THAT AGAIN, AND I WILL KILL YOU.

UNDERSTAND THAT I DO NOT KNOW WHERE THEY HAVE TAKEN HER. I DO NOT KNOW WHERE THEY ARE. BUT I DO NOT HAVE TO KNOW.
I KNOW WHERE THERE ARE OTHERS AND WHERE THERE ARE OTHERS. YOU CAN FIND THE ONES YOU WANT. THEY ARE LIKE ANTS IN THE KITCHEN. FIND ONE. YOU KNOW THERE ARE MORE NEARBY.
URM...?!
JUST BE READY BECAUSE I DON'T THINK WE HAVE A LOT OF TIME.
SNIFF! SNIFF!
WHERE IS SHE? WHERE'D THEY TAKE HER?

--uFFF!
URNGH!
WHERE?
I SUGGEST YOU TELL HIM.
YOU KNOW THE ONE FOR WHOM I SPEAK. YOU KNOW WHAT I CAN DO. JUST AS YOU KNOW THAT THE ONE YOU SERVE WILL DO NOTHING TO SAVE YOU.
ANSWER HIS QUESTION.
NOW.

..HELP ME... HELP ME...
...SHADOWS TALKING...SHADOWS TALKING AND SHADOWS WALKING AND TALKING AND WALKING AND I DON'T KNOW WERE MY SHOES ARE WHERE ARE MY SHOES I CAN'T I CAN'T HELP ME...
.PLEASE...

...TRCH...SHAKH
...TEST...TEST...
...THIS IS WHY YOU WANT TO KILL YOURSELF..

SHAH...HA!
CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH SHARP OBJECTS.
YOU COULD GET HURT

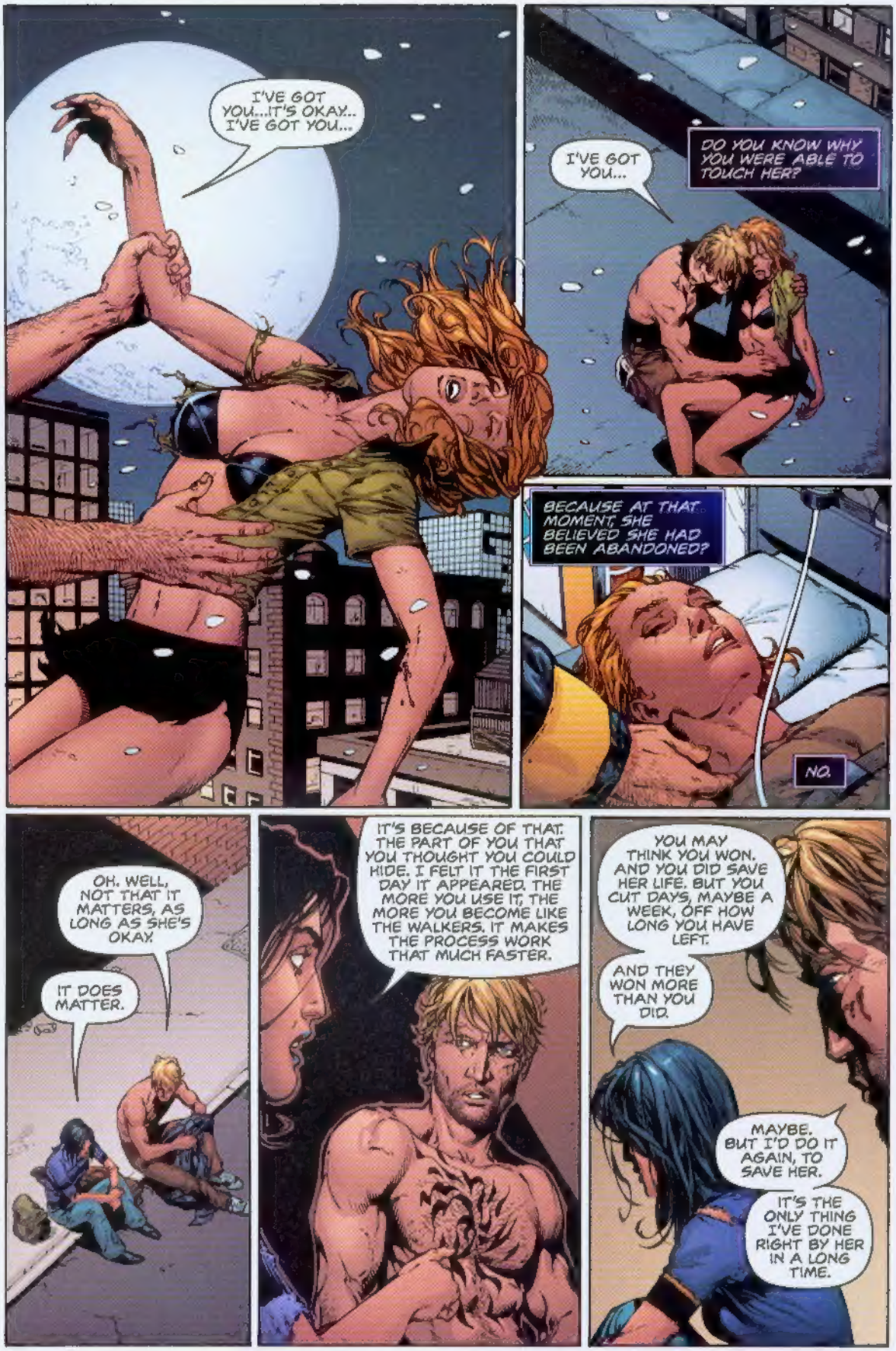
C'MON...WE'RE ALMOST --
...THERE...
YOU WANT TO DIE BECAUSE THERE'S NO HOPE.

NO ONE LOVES YOU. NO ONE LIKES YOU. YOU ARE ALONE.
NO ONE WILL HELP YOU. NO ONE WILL COME FOR YOU.
YOU WALKED OUT ON THE ONLY MAN YOU EVER LOVED, AND HE HATES YOU.
YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BE AS PRETTY AS YOU WERE. THE OLDER YOU GET, THE LESS THE CHANCE YOU WILL EVER KNOW LOVE AGAIN.
AND REALLY, WHAT'S LIFE WORTH IF NO ONE WILL EVER LOVE YOU?

NO HOPE.
NO CHANCE.
ONLY TEARS. ONLY FEARS. ONLY PAIN.
BETTER TO DIE.
BUT LEAVE A NOTE. IT'S ALL DAVID'S FAULT. HE DROVE YOU TO THIS. DROVE YOU TO KILL YOURSELF.
BETTER TO DIE.
HIS FAULT. BETTER TO DIE. HIS FAULT.

SARAH!
SshhHHhaaa-RrRaAAAA!
NO!
FIRE EXIT
GO ON! I'LL HOLD THEM BACK!

SARAH... PLEASE, STOP.. IT'S ME --
SSSSTOPPPPPPR..
...BETTER TO DIE...BETTER TO DIE...HIS FAULT... HIS --
NO!
AAAAGHHHH...
I'M HERE... I'M...HERE...
DA...VID...
PLEASE, DON'T...DON'T DO IT... I LOVE YOU... I'M SORRY.. I'M SORRY
...I...


I'VE GOT YOU...IT'S OKAY.. I'VE GOT YOU...
I'VE GOT YOU...
DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU WERE ABLE TO TOUCH HER?
BECAUSE AT THAT MOMENT, SHE BELIEVED SHE HAD BEEN ABANDONED?
NO.
OH. WELL, NOT THAT IT MATTERS, AS LONG AS SHE'S OKAY.
IT DOES MATTER.
IT'S BECAUSE OF THAT. THE PART OF YOU THAT YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD HIDE. I FELT IT THE FIRST DAY IT APPEARED. THE MORE YOU USE IT, THE MORE YOU BECOME LIKE THE WALKERS. IT MAKES THE PROCESS WORK THAT MUCH FASTER.
YOU MAY THINK YOU WON. AND YOU DID SAVE HER LIFE. BUT YOU CUT DAYS, MAYBE A WEEK, OFF HOW LONG YOU HAVE LEFT.
AND THEY WON MORE THAN YOU DID.
MAYBE. BUT I'D DO IT AGAIN, TO SAVE HER.
IT'S THE ONLY THING I'VE DONE RIGHT BY HER IN A LONG TIME.

I'M...JUST SORRY YOU GOT HURT.
IT'S OKAY. IT'S THE BLEEDING. THIS IS JUST FIRST BLOOD.
IT WON'T BE THE LAST.
WHEN YOU SAID THE BLEEDING WAS COMING...I THOUGHT YOU MEANT IT WOULD BE ME.
OF COURSE YOU DID.
BUT --
LET'S...TALK ABOUT IT SOME OTHER TIME, OKAY? WE SHOULD GET MOVING. WE'VE LOST TIME WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE.
DO YOU THINK SHE'LL REMEMBER SEEING ME?
IN HER CONDITION? NO. SHE WON'T KNOW WHAT HIT HER. ALL SHE'LL REMEMBER IS THAT SOMEBODY SAVED HER. THAT SOMEBODY CARED.
WELL, MAYBE SHE'LL COME AWAY WITH MORE THAN THAT.
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
OH...NO REASON IN PARTICULAR.
THE MAIN THING IS, SHE KNOWS SOMEBODY CARED, AND SOMEBODY WAS LOOKING OUT FOR HER. IN THE LONG RUN, THAT'S WHAT MATTERS.
YEAH...I GUESS THAT'S THE BEST ANY OF US CAN HOPE FOR. SO WHAT NOW?
WE WALK FASTER.
A LOT FASTER.
TO BE CONTINUED...

THE CHANGE HAS ALREADY BEGUN...

..AND IT WILL ONLY GET WORSE

David Grey is running out of time.

J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI'S

MIDNIGHT NATION™ 7

Created and Written by

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JOE'S COMICS™

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